

## In this issue

- ◆ Monthly meeting
- ◆ Extra open meeting: Antarctica and climate change
- ◆ Groups liaison update
- ◆ New: Projects with the grandchildren
- ◆ 40th anniversary of Tynedale u3a
- ◆ Committee vacancies
- ◆ Group news and activities
- ◆ Desert Island Discs 2022-2023
- ◆ From our members
- ◆ Committee and membership
- ◆ New members
- ◆ Dates for your diary



## Monthly Meeting, Tuesday 6 December 2022 at 2pm in the Great Hall, Hexham Abbey - and on Zoom

**Topic:** Plant poisons

**Speaker:** Chris Pollock

Chris Pollock is a plant physiologist who spent 40 years in Aberystwyth as a researcher in various aspects of grassland agriculture. He was Director of the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research in Aberystwyth from 1993 to 2007. Latterly he sat on science advisory committees for both the UK and Welsh governments. Chris is an Emeritus Professor at Aberystwyth University. He is a Fellow of the Royal Agricultural Societies, the Society of Biology and the Learned Society of Wales, a past winner of the British Grassland Society Award, and an Honorary Doctor of the University of Birmingham. He was made a CBE in 2002 for services to the environment.



Tea, coffee and mince pies will be served after the meeting.

## Extra open meeting: Antarctica and climate change

**Speaker:** Professor Mike Bentley  
**Date and time:** Tuesday 24 January 2023 at 2pm  
**Venue:** Masonic Hall, Hexham



Antarctica and the Southern Ocean are already hugely affected by climate change, and future projections show many of these effects will get worse. But how do we know this? What is the science behind the Antarctic climate change headlines and BBC Frozen Planet images?

In this talk, Professor Mike Bentley will talk about the science behind the methods used to monitor the changing climate in Antarctica, and the impact of climate change on the atmosphere, the ocean, the ice sheet, sea ice and ecosystems.



He will explain some of the technologies and measurements that allow us to detect change in this harshest of environments, which has the roughest seas on the planet, an ice sheet 50 times the size of the UK, and temperatures that regularly drop below minus 50C. He will also discuss changes in the plants and animals sparsely located around its margins. Mike will show how some of these impacts, such as sea level rise, are being felt beyond Antarctica.

Mike Bentley is a Professor of Antarctic Geoscience in the Department of Geography at Durham University. His research work focuses on understanding how the Antarctic sheet is changing due to climate change. Mike grew up in Hexham before attending the University of Edinburgh. He has been working in Antarctica for over 25 years, including a total of over a year spent in tents on the ice sheet! Mike has been awarded the Polar Medal by the Queen for his contributions to Antarctic research, and is Chair of the UK National Committee for Antarctic Research.

## Groups liaison news

### Northern rocks

'Northern Rocks' is the name of the newly formed Geology group that meets on the afternoon of the second Tuesday in the month. Kate Clouston is the point of contact for the group which she describes as a 'fun-based group of learners who want to explore the geology of the Northeast through local field trips'.

If you are interested, then please contact Kate ([dkclouston@googlemail.com](mailto:dkclouston@googlemail.com)) or contact the Group Fixer.

### Walking with dogs

The Dog Walking Group has changed its name to better reflect what it does. It is a walking group that welcomes dogs. They now meet on the first Monday and third Tuesday.

### New groups

Several potential new groups are currently under discussion. **Art Appreciation 3** will be holding their first meeting in December. Other groups considering a start-up, probably in the New Year, include two **French Discussion groups** and a second **Topical Discussion** group.

**Putting the World Right** now meets on the second and fourth Wednesday afternoon.

There is also some interest in **Beginners Spanish** but so far I do not have enough to attempt a group launch.

Finally, a reminder that Chris Simmons is looking for **crossword enthusiasts**.

## Projects with the grandchildren

You will see below that we have started a regular item in the newsletter called 'Projects with the Grandchildren'. There is considerable expertise and experience in this subject within our u3a. You will see from this month's entry that we are starting with a simple project. Why not try it? Our aim would be to develop a group dedicated to this cause. Frankly a better group name might be 'Projects for big kids using the grandchildren as an excuse'.

Colin Argent, Group Fixer

## Projects with the grandchildren



### This month: The vacuum bazooka

#### What is it?

The vacuum bazooka uses the suction of a vacuum cleaner to fire a projectile. It does this by creating a vacuum in a length of drainpipe. The ambient atmospheric pressure outside the drainpipe is sufficient to fire the projectile.

#### What will I need?

- ◆ A length of tube, say 32mm plastic drain tubing for the barrel
- ◆ A tee-piece to match the tube
- ◆ Corks, such as champagne-type corks, for the bullets
- ◆ Mouldable soft but heavier stuff for the front of the corks, such as Blu-tack, Plasticine or Play-Doh held on with tape
- ◆ Pieces of tough paper for the muzzle papers
- ◆ Some tape to attach the vacuum cleaner to the tee-piece
- ◆ A target, e.g. rings drawn in felt-tip pen on a large piece of paper



#### How do I do it?

Watch the 'how to' video on [YouTube](#).

Or go to the Engineering and Technology website page on [Stem Challenges](#).

Note: On this page scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on the box 'show more'. Scroll down the page again and click on the box 'Lockdown Challenge: Join the A team and make a vacuum bazooka'.



## 40th anniversary of Tynedale u3a

2023 will be our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The committee want to mark it as a special milestone and celebrate it throughout the year beginning with the AGM. If you have any ideas, please contact a member of the committee, and share them with us.

Tynedale u3a has evolved over the forty years. At our AGM on 7 March, we hope to feature some of the changes that have taken place. We would like to hear from members who joined Tynedale u3a more than 10 years ago who can share some of their memories. If anyone has any photographs, they will be welcome too. If you know of any stories of past members or are in touch with a past member who would be willing to share their memories, please get in touch.

*Celebrating*  
**40** *Years*

We want to hear about the different groups we have had, the trips and holidays. We also want to know about how business was conducted as we imagine IT did not feature as strongly in the early days.

We will communicate the memories either after the AGM or feature them in subsequent newsletters throughout the year. Please help if you can.

We look forward to being overwhelmed with responses.

Wendy Dale

## Tynedale u3a committee vacancies

We are delighted that Barbara Redhead has stepped forward to take on the role of Treasurer at the AGM. In order that she can hit the ground running, we have co-opted her on to the committee with immediate effect. Barbara is normally away two or three times a year and she will need an assistant to cover these periods. The committee recognises that it would make sense in terms of contingency planning to have an assistant. This is the reason why we are advertising the role as a vacant position on the committee.

Susan Turnbull, our Business Secretary, has expressed a willingness to take on the role of Assistant Treasurer if someone is interested in taking on her current role. We are therefore advertising both roles.

The most pressing need now is to identify a newsletter editor. Alicia Cresswell is coming to the end of her three-year term and the role will become vacant from the AGM in early March. Alicia will be away in March, so we are hoping that a handover meeting can take place in February.

Our u3a is strong and healthy because its committee has a good turnaround of committed members. Each year it is refreshed. Please consider taking on one of these roles and get in touch with Wendy Dale or the current incumbent.

### Vacancies

Newsletter Editor

Assistant Treasurer

Business Secretary

Events Secretary

## Group news and activities

### Putting the World Right Group

The new group had its inaugural meeting in November and bonded well, agreeing ground rules and initial discussion themes. The members have different geographic, educational and family lives so we should get a variety of perspectives. Everyone though shares a strong sense of curiosity about life plus an unwillingness to accept everything at face value — we ask ‘why?’ and ‘what’s your evidence?’. The group meets fortnightly and upcoming topics include ‘deference,’ ‘tourism,’ ‘parliamentary reform’, and ‘making the NHS work better’.

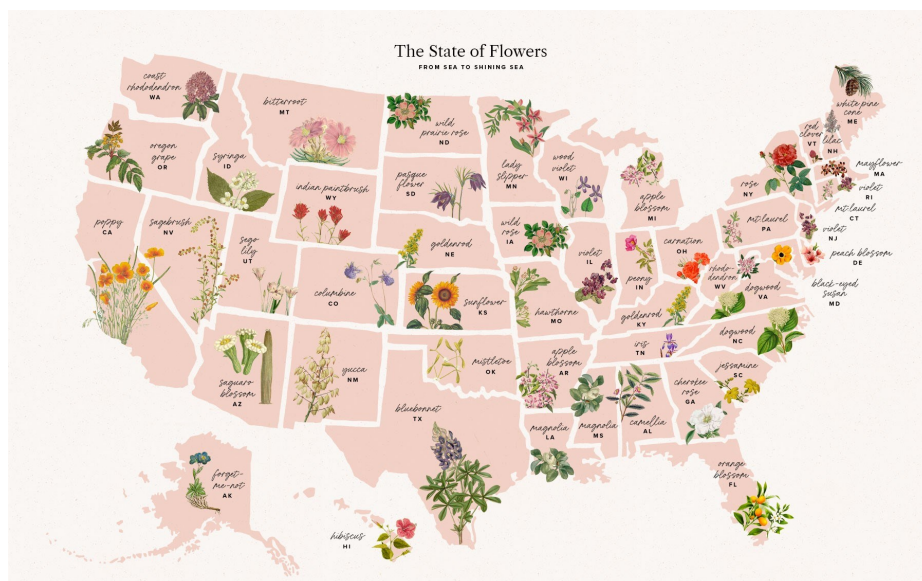
More information from Mike Foster at [mikef@wowu.co.uk](mailto:mikef@wowu.co.uk).



### Wildlife Group

At our November meeting, Carole took us on a whistlestop tour of the USA to learn about the flowers chosen to represent each state of the Union.

I was impressed to learn that many states had adopted a flower symbol a century or more ago. These state flowers are often used on coins or in place names, and celebrated at festivals. They may recognise local people or events and their economic or cultural importance to the community. The state flower is part of each state’s identity.



The choice of state flowers includes some readily identifiable plants, such as the Saguaro cactus of Arizona, the sunflower of Kansas and rhododendrons native to some west coast states. The Bluebonnet of Texas is a native small blue lupin chosen in homage to the pioneer women of the state. It was later sown along roads across the USA at the request of First Lady ‘Ladybird Johnson’.

Other flowers including peonies, several roses, and the red carnation worn by William McKinley, the President from Ohio assassinated in 1901, were introduced by settlers and cherished in their respective states. Some, including apple, peach and orange blossom, are also of great economic significance to the people of their states.

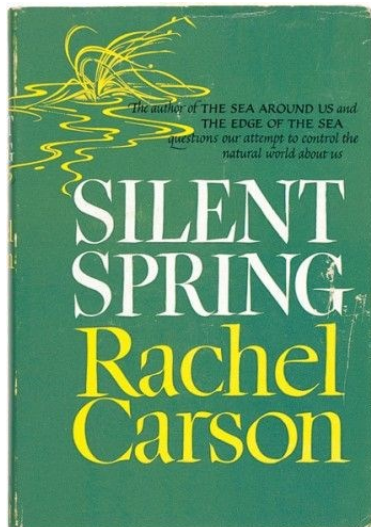
The Indian Paintbrush of Wyoming and the Bitterroot of Montana are among local plants long used by indigenous peoples before the waves of colonising Europeans and others spread across the continent. The mountain forget-me-not of Alaska is among the rare plants found nowhere else that are protected in state legislation. Uprooting, and even picking some state plants from the wild might result in imprisonment. In some states preserves are set up to protect the plants and their habitats.

In discussion, someone asked why we have no county flowers here, but we found that we do. Voted for in 2002, the county flower for Northumberland is the bloody cranesbill, which flowers on the coastal dunes over the summer. A topic for a future meeting perhaps? Many thanks to Carole for creating such an unusual and interesting presentation.

Jenny Loring

## Environment group

Sixty years ago, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* was published and, perhaps rather surprisingly for a book about pesticides, became a best-seller. This book formed the subject for our November meeting. Carson, a marine biologist by training, already had three successful 'popular science' books about the sea and seashore to her name. She was able to tap into the developing scientific evidence that DDT and other synthetic pesticides were different in their toxicology and ecological impacts to the lead and arsenic compounds of the previous pesticide generation.



Issues of food chains, bio-accumulation, thinned egg-shells, environmental persistence but developing insect resistance, were soon settled in Carson's favour but the impact of DDT (*et al*) on human health - as carcinogen and as endocrine disrupter - remained contested for decades. As evidence of Carson's wise foresight developed, the attack dogs switched to claims that she had 'killed more than Hitler' because of the banning of DDT leading to the resurgence of malaria. This storyline is totally at odds with the academic literature on malaria, but fits with Carson's contention that her book wasn't just about DDT or mankind's attempt to control nature, but that the real issue is whether we can control ourselves.

In keeping with DDT's persistence in the environment, we will return to the subject in January.

Matthew Naylor

## Desert Island Discs 2022-2023

My castaway for the November Desert Island Discs was David Roberts. David shared with us stories from his very full and varied life, together with a wide selection of music in his eight choices of music to take with him to the island. These were his music choices:

1. Ol' Man River, from Showboat, sung by Paul Robeson
2. Swing Low, Sweet Chariot. Welsh Male Voice Choir, conductor Colin Jones
3. The Deadwood Stage, from Calamity Jane, sung by Doris Day
4. Hymns & Arias. Max Boyce
5. I Vow to Thee my Country, from Holst's Planet Suite, sung by Katherine Jenkins
6. When I Fall in Love. Nat 'King' Cole
7. Take Five. Dave Brubeck
8. The Lark Ascending. Vaughan Williams, performed by Nicola Benedetti



The next Desert Island Discs will be on 20 December, when my castaway will be former Tynedale u3a Chair, Bill Walton.

Mike Worthington



## From our members

### 'Why I go on stage' by Steve Mobbs

One evening in 2010, must've been around the end of May, I bit into a very large bullet.

Not literally of course. But I did something that scared me a little, and walked into a room full of strangers to start singing as a hobby.

The room was in the Hexham Community Centre and the strangers were members of the Hexham Amateur Stage Society (HASS to those who have no time to say the whole sentence). As I walked in, two women who were going in ahead of me whispered to each other that there was "a man following us." I thought at the time that they might have been a bit unnerved by that, so I did my best to give the appearance of an innocent baritone just looking for something to do. But I learned over the following weeks that the society was – and is – mainly composed of ladies and that male members are few in number. The sight of a strange man voluntarily walking into the rehearsal and actually asking to join is as rare as a Cabinet Minister hanging on to their job for more than a month. So it was no wonder they were excited by my appearance. The more men that join, the better it is for balance when the chorus is in full flow.

That evening I was given a welcome that was warm and sincere, so I decided to stay.

That sense of nervousness that I felt on my arrival then still revisits me whenever we put on a show, but those strangers are now friends. That includes the two ladies who were so intrigued at my arrival.

I learned that the society was about to start rehearsals for *Carousel*, the Rodgers and Hammerstein classic. Leading roles were mentioned, and in an outcome that still astounds me, I was asked to audition for the part of Mr Snow. I'd only been in five minutes (almost literally) and there I was being encouraged to go for a lead role. Yes, okay, I thought, always good to push yourself. I passed the voice test, where I could sing a few lines of my choice just to prove that I could hold a tune, and managed to slip past the guards there to go on and do a full audition for the role. Again, I passed that and started to think that maybe I could warble satisfactorily enough to carry it off.



Me with my new friends, a straw hat and a cheesy grin



With Carrie Pippetridge (Clair Applegarth) as Mr Snow in *Carousel* – my first role

I loved the Wednesday rehearsals, forming friendships along the way. It's true that most of those friendships were formed at the pub after rehearsals rather than at the sessions themselves, but it was easy to settle in and become a part of this lovely group.

I'm not a nervous person. I laugh at the idea of public speaking, and can walk into a room full of strangers without batting an eyelid. So I didn't mind singing in front of everyone on a Wednesday, as they were all very supportive. I will wail away in the shower to amuse myself and any hidden spiders, so I didn't think that I would worry about singing on stage. Unfortunately, I hadn't factored in the idea the people I was singing to during the actual performance were paying customers and I needed to raise my singing to the highest level that I could possibly achieve. All of a sudden it wasn't just about how I felt.

The first night arrived quicker than I had thought it would, and I began to worry a little about what was going to happen. Would I forget my lines? Would my American accent sound stupid? Would my trousers fall

off? All these thoughts and worse arrived (if you can imagine something worse than your trousers falling off in public) as the show started and I made my way to the wings to wait for my cue.

There were two steps in front of me which went up to the stage and into the lights, and as my moment arrived I genuinely thought I wouldn't be able to climb them. "Go on, legs, MOVE!" I thought. "No, we'd rather we didn't if you don't mind, and I think your stomach agrees with us," came the reply. But, short of setting the fire alarms off or pretending to collapse, I had no choice, and so on I went.

It's easy I know for those who don't appreciate the appeal of musicals or drama to ridicule groups such as HASS. I've been called a "luvvie" by some friends more times than I care to remember, and yes, although we can't pretend that the standard of production is the same as a full-on West End show, it is societies like HASS that provide a vital community service as well as an alternative to sitting on the sofa, watching Eastenders or Coronation Street. Not that there is anything wrong with that if that's your bag, but the point is that HASS offers an alternative to those who want something else out of a Wednesday evening.



That beard is real, grown for the part of Lazar Wolf in *Fiddler on the Roof*

I stepped on to the stage and belted out my first line, despite protests from various parts of my body, and I've never looked back. That was the precise moment that I discovered that I love singing in public. Whether they like it or not.

In the subsequent twelve years, I've been in almost every show that the society have put on. My friendships have strengthened, my voice has improved, my confidence has improved and the spiders in the shower are happier.



It's good to be the King! – from *Cinderella*

I've played all sorts of roles; I've been a pirate, a King, a bar owner, a policeman, a travelling businessman, and a festival promoter. I've learned to really love musicals. People will say that they're not real, that people don't just start singing in public. To which I say "Tish and pish!" They aren't *meant* to be representative of real life. They are an escape from it. And if you think people don't burst into song at the drop of a hat, you've never been in the pub with us after rehearsals!

This week we are back on stage for the first time in three years as we celebrate HASS's 90th anniversary with a concert at the Queens Hall in Hexham. The rehearsals are nearly over, the

stage is set and lots of tickets have been sold.

And come Wednesday night, I will be with my like-minded friends, behind the curtain at 6:55pm, excited at the prospect of yet another chance to perform on stage.

As long as my legs agree.

[This article](#), reproduced here with permission from the author, was published on 16 October 2022 in Steve's blog, [Steve's Journal](#).





## Your committee

### Chair

Wendy Dale - 606215

[tyneu3achair1@btinternet.com](mailto:tyneu3achair1@btinternet.com)

### Business Secretary

Susan Turnbull - 607264

[tyneu3abus@gmail.com](mailto:tyneu3abus@gmail.com)

### Treasurer

David Pattinson - 01661 842903

[tyneu3afindavid@gmail.com](mailto:tyneu3afindavid@gmail.com)

### Membership Secretary

John Dark - 602584

[tyneu3amemsec1@gmail.com](mailto:tyneu3amemsec1@gmail.com)

### Programme Secretary

Barrie Mellars - 07831255520

[tyneu3aprogsec@yahoo.com](mailto:tyneu3aprogsec@yahoo.com)

### Events Secretary

Vacant

### Groups Liaison Secretary

Colin Argent - 07498798020

[groupfixertynedale@btinternet.com](mailto:groupfixertynedale@btinternet.com)

### Publicity Officer

Sally Hewitt - 07500136870

[tyneu3apublicity@gmail.com](mailto:tyneu3apublicity@gmail.com)

### Beacon Administrator and Website Manager

Lesley Parsons - 07588178570

[tyneu3abeacon@gmail.com](mailto:tyneu3abeacon@gmail.com)

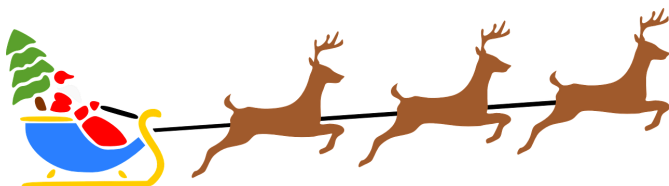
### Newsletter Editor

Alicia Cresswell - 608170

[tyneu3aeditor@gmail.com](mailto:tyneu3aeditor@gmail.com)

## Membership

We currently have 482 members, including 11 associate members.



Tynedale u3a is a registered charity (number 515733).



A very warm welcome to new members Catherine Booth, Liz Brittlebank, Linda Talbot, Alice Southern, Janet Storrie, Pauline Birchall, Juliet Devereux, Jan O'Brien, Tim O'Brien, Katherine Clouston, David Clouston, Susan Lesley Laws, Andrew Barker, Amanda Hewitt, Olha Krasovska, Linda Corkhill, Joan Kendle, Joseph Norman Davison, Adrian Alderton, Hazel Newman, Chris Drinkwater and James Borrell.

## Dates for your diary

### Monthly meeting - 6 December at 2pm

Chris Pollock, Plant poisons

### Desert Island Discs - 20 December 2022 at 2pm

Castaway: Bill Walton

### Extra open meeting - 24 January 2023 at 2pm

Professor Mike Bentley, Antarctica and climate change

The 2023 monthly meetings programme will be published next month.



## Next issue of the newsletter

The next issue of the newsletter will be published in January 2023.

We welcome contributions from groups and individual members.

**Please send your contributions to the newsletter editor, Alicia Cresswell, by 15 December. Email address: [tyneu3aeditor@gmail.com](mailto:tyneu3aeditor@gmail.com).**

Thank you